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ABSTRACT

The document presents the text of a speech comparing American and German attitudes toward history, followed by a discussion of issues raised in the speech by conference participants. The first part of the speech identifies aspects of American and German history which are of importance to citizens of each country. American history is characterized by rapid growth, integration of immigrants, grass roots democracy, and conflict among historians over the heroic nature of many historical figures. German history is characterized by an ancient mythical past, a crisis of national identity after World War II, and few national heroes. Both countries experienced a decline in interest in national history during the 1960s, as reflected in enrollments in academic courses and dissatisfaction with national issues of racial equality and environmental protection. However, interest appears to be reviving as evidenced by the American Bicentennial celebration and an effort by the German Historical Association to improve history instruction in the schools. Discussion of major points baised by this speech focused on the problem of curricula in both countries and the relationship between academic history and the national character. It was agreed that history must study the character of society and be more than the episodic study of current events. (Author/AV)

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WHAT HISTORY MEANS TO US: A COMPARISON OF AMERICAN AND GERMAN ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY

Günter Moltmann

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The author, Dr. Günter Moltmann, Professor of History at the University of Hamburg, is well known for his work in German-American relations. He also serves as president of the German Association for American Studies. His address: Historisches Seminar der Universität Hamburg, von-Melle-Park 6, 2000 Hamburg 13.

The discussion following Dr. Moltmann's paper is an edited version.

The History Session of the Conference was under the chairmanship of Dr. Bernard Sheehan, Associate Professor of History at Indiana University.

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Günter Moltmann

Speaking of a theme as broad as this raises considerable difficulties. Is there such a thing as a collective national attitude toward the past? If yes, how can the impact of history in our time be measured? Are there reliable indicators for the meaning of history to us? Apparently, complicated methodological problems are involved which I cannot discuss in detail. I have to restrict myself to speaking of personal impressions and of some facts which may reveal part of the truth. I think, however, that the topic is an important one which is in the mind of many people and was rightfully included in a conference where the systems of West Germany and the United States are comparatively analyzed.

I will divide my presentation into four steps and begin with specific aspects of United States history which seem to be vital to the American conceptions of history. This will be followed by a discussion of certain aspects of German history which are of importance for the German understanding of the past. Thirdly, I will try to analyze and compare the decline of historical interest during the late 1960s and early 1970s in both countries. Finally, I will compare the meaning of history as it is conceived in both countries today.

Regarding the United States, an important factor is the relative shortness of its history and the rather straight course it has taken. Development from the Revolution to the present state of world power lasted only two centuries. True, there have been critical periods in those two hundred years when the republic was shaken in its foundations, for example the War of 1812, the ordeal of the Civil War, the Great Depression, but there were no complete turnovers as was characteristic in the development of continental states. In the United States basic political, cultural, social, and economic concepts had to be revised and remolded from time to time, but the cornerstones of 1776 were never overthrown.

Looking back one sees an unparalleled historical process. Thirteen dependent colonies with less than four million inhabitants developed into a powerful state with 215 million people, an increase of fiftyfold. From a small territory between the Atlantic and the Appalachians, a continent was opened up and conquered. Within the short span of six or seven generations a nation developed which can easily comprehend its own history, be proud of its origins, and self-assured in view of its achievements.

This process was combined with an equally amazing development in social structure: the society continuously expanded through the integration of immigrants. The assimilation of newcomers often proved difficult, but it was nevertheless one of the great factors of nation-building. Immigrants, wherever they came from and however different their languages may have been upon arrival, had one thing in common: they had left their home countries out of protest against depressing conditions and were looking forward to building a new life in a new country, to getting ahead and finding happiness. This motivation of the immigrants may explain the hectic striving for achievement and the untiring openness to experiment and improvement so characteristic of American society.

Everybody knows that the process of nation-building in the United States did not lead to conformity. Pluralistic elements endured or re-emerged. However there is no doubt that an American nation exists and that the members of this nation have the feeling of

belonging together. One expression of this feeling is the devotion to national history which may be observed in many ways in the United States. National heroes, like the Founding Fathers and great leaders such as Lincoln, are worshipped. Documents of the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, are subject to a national cult; they are symbols of the American political system, and as such are honored by many thousands of visitors in the National Archives every year.

National consciousness and pride are also reflected in the formulation and attractiveness of Frederick Jackson Turner's interpretation of American history. According to this great historian, American political and social institutions were not imported from Europe, but originated on the frontier in the American West. Not ideas, but "grass roots democracy" determined the American way of life. This interpretation was honored for decades until it fell under heavy criticism. But this criticism was mainly directed against certain aspects of the Turner Thesis. When the whole interpretation was questioned, it was often replaced by another equally simple view of America's historical tradition.

Certainly, historians in the United States have not always agreed when interpreting their national past. American historiography is not characterized only by the celebration of the national tradition. It has always included controversy, criticism, and the revision of cherished ideas about the past. Schools of historians have taken pleasure in debunking great national heroes, have tried to tear them from their pedestals and expose their political and human weaknesses. Nowhere was the engagement of the United States in the First World War so quickly criticized as in the United States. Nowhere was a sucessful national leader in times of crisis placed before a tribunal of historians like Franklin D. Roosevelt was. Nowhere was the American political tradition so critically and skeptically examined as in the United States in the 1960s by New Left historians.

But even this tendency toward harsh revisionism shows a strong attachment to national history. Some American businessmen, industrialists, and other strictly future-oriented persons may sometimes have condemned history as an unnecessary field of human interest. "History is mainly bunk" was a famous expression of Henry Ford. However, there are many facts indicating that history means a great deal to Americans and that many Americans have a close relationship to their short and straightforward history.

As a foreigner one is astonished to see the many historical markers along the highways giving facts about what had happened at certain places long ago. Museums are visited by many people, more, it seems to me, than museums in the Old World. Historical associations, sometimes very small, often very nationalistic, exist everywhere in the United States. Societies like the Daughters of the American Revolution are unknown in European countries. The work they do for the restoration of historical monuments is certainly remarkable. Membership in professional historical organizations by far exceeds that of European nations. To sum it up, Americans in general love their history, as short as it is, perhaps just because it is so short and easily understandable.

For West Germans history is a very difficult thing. The many ups and downs, the crooked roads of German history through a thousand years, are far less manageable and comprehensible than the American past. A confusing multiplicity of historical monuments, ruins, remnants, and traces is manifest almost everywhere. It is more difficult for Germans to cope with their heritage than it is for Americans to understand theirs. For many Germans history seems to be a burden, whether they admit it or not.

The academic historical profession in Germany is old though, having been developed

along with the study of historical method since the early nineteenth century. It enjoyed a great reputation with the German public and had a certain impact on historical research and teaching in other countries as well. The established representatives of this academic discipline have helped to coin a national self-image. The problem with these established historians, however, was that they usually served the changing social and political systems in Germany by underpinning their respective historical self-justifying concepts. Historians were asked to do this and many of them did so because they did not want to swim against the current and be isolated from the public trend. In contrast to the United States, the German political system changed drastically four times within one century: 1871, 1918, 1933, and 1945. Therefore, the German concept of history could never show the same continuity and consistency as the American one.

In Germany a nationalistic legend was developed at about the same time as in the United States -- during the first half of the nineteenth century. But it looked very difficult. The roots and origins of the nation were discovered in a mythical past. While American celebrated their founding fathers of the eighteenth century, Germans celebrated Arminius, a Germanic leader who defended his people against the Romans and destroyed the Roman army of Quintilius Varus in the year 9 A.D. This early German "founding father" lived long before a German nation really came into existence. Not much is known about him as a person, but he was made into a hero and a large monument was built at a place where the battle supposedly took place. The German conception of a nation included an old cultural tradition, a common language, and historical achievements of a thousand years. Only such a history seemed to justify a national mission and a feeling of national superiority. Nations like the United States appeared artificial, bloodless, unorganic, and meaningless.

This old German idea of national history, combined with self-assurance, was radically questioned in its validity when the Third Reich collapsed and Germany was partitioned and reduced in territory by the victors of the Second World War. A crisis of national identity was unavoidable and that also meant a crisis of national history. The importance of this can be seen when one looks at national heroes and the cult devoted to them. At an international conference on teaching history some years ago, an American participant asked a German colleague about national heroes who could be presented to German students as patterns of greatness and virtue. The German answered that there were not really any, that German history has lost its heroes. Personalities worshipped in the past had been irrevocably debunked. Arminius, Frederick the Great, and even Bismarck were not regarded as heroes anymore, but rather as ambivalent figures. The American, thinking of Washington or Lincoln and their eminent role in American education, was astonished and expressed his regret. The German participant was not really sure whether to regret his situation or to find it advantageous.

Indeed Germans in the Federal Republic are in an almost unique situation. The absence of generally respected heroes is very unusual. Most other nations have them and admire them. But in West Germany today, it is more than that. Patriotism is missing and all attempts to revive it have failed so far. Where national unity is missing and hope for reunification has given way to resignation, patriotic attitudes can hardly be expected, at least not for a certain period until a new national identity has been discovered.

This does not mean that there is a lack of interest in and understanding for history in West Germany. The absence of national heroes and patriotic conceptions of history may be of some disadvantage, but it also has a liberating effect. Empty clichés and taboos have disappeared with them. If history is a field for self-orientation for today's human beings, it has become wider and more revealing for Germans since 1945.

This, however, is only the case for West Germans. In East Germany history has been politicized again since 1945. Old heroes have been replaced by new ones and old clichés by new clichés. Materialism and Communist doctrines may have opened some new vistas of historical retrospect, but they have again narrowed the conception of history drastically.

Regarding the interest in history of the West German public during the post-war period, it is difficult to measure its degree and to compare it with the American scene. I have no statistics on visitors of historical museums or on membership in historical associations. I have the impression that interest in historical monuments and in local history increased after the war, but that interest in political history and national history decreased.

In schools and universities the discipline of history occupied an unimpaired and well respected position. Perhaps even more so than before the war because the study of contemporary hisotry, Zeitgeschichte, was regarded as very important in coming to grips with the terrible results of the Nazi era. Not only did the Allied policy of re-education support this view, but it was also the conviction of German educators that the Nazis' reign of terror was a particularly promising subject for education through history.

To sum up and compare basic aspects of historical thought in both countries, one can see differences and similarities. Differences exist in the way the people look at their respective past. Historical dimensions differ and with them their comprehensiveness. Hero-worship and the cult of the nation also differ. In the United States national history is mainly understood as the prologue to the present time and the future; in Germany it is used as a resource offering facts for self-orientation, but its complicated course forbids an easy and straightforward historical interpretation. Similarities exist when one looks at the interest and the intensity with which people of both countries dig into the past. The number of history students has grown through the decades both here and there. New teaching positions have been established during the 1950s and 1960s, curricula have been expanded, and a growing number of doctoral candidates have been registered in both countries. This development, however, has to be viewed in the context of broadening academic education in America and West Germany; it is not a specific phenomenon in the field of history.

Around the mid-1960s something began which one might call the great crisis in the understanding of history. One could also speak of a disturbance in the relation of the society to its past. Conventional methods of research and interpretation came under attack. Historians were accused of superficial interpretations, influenced by the social and political bias. Ideological presumptions were to be exposed, as well as national and social taboos. According to the "new" historians, ideas, slogans, political programs, diplomatic maneuvering, and similar aspects had been given too much weight. Important social developments had been neglected, as well as the impact of big business on politics. Foreign policy had been given primary importance rather than basic internal factors. Hermeneutic methods of interpretation and eclecticism seemed unsatisfactory. Empirical research was demanded. The social sciences offered better tools. Quantitative analysis and the use of the computer became fashionable. Historians should concentrate on social changes and conflicts anyway. This alone could justify the existence of their discipline.

The crisis of historical concepts was a complex phenomenon. It was first to be found in the United States and began with assaults on the so-called "consensus history" of the 1950s. William A. Williams, whose first disturbing publication, The Tragedy of American History, appeared in 1959, interpreted American foreign trade and the economic

penetration of foreign markets as economic imperialism and argued that this kind of imperialism had determined United States foreign policy from the beginning to the present time. Internal problems such as overproduction and depression were always solved by economic expansion. With this he formulated the pattern of interpretation for many young historians, called the New-Left-Revisionists. Lloyd C. Gardner, Walter LaFaber, and Gabriel Kolko may be singled out because of their impact on German historiography through translations of their works.

Another favored theme of the New Left was the Cold War. As against interpretations of "consensus historians", they blamed American politicians, acting in the interest of economic expansion and hegemony in the world, for its outbreak. Soviet foreign policy makers were exculpated and justified. However, the critics were not only interested in the history of foreign policy. In general they favored a history of people instead of a history of established elites. Social conflicts, representation and the exploitation of the underprivileged were the themes they preferred.

This criticsim of conventional historiography must be understood as part of a more general phenomenon. There was an over-all crisis in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, raising fundamental questions about the identity of the American nation. It was the time of the civil rights movement, of racial disturbances, militant revolts in the cities and on campuses. Consciousness of the character of the Vietnam War increasingly disturbed young Americans. Doubts were raised about the validity of the American social order and the justification for America's leading role in the World. Among young Americans an anti-Americanism was to be seen which shocked the older generation.

This change of the historical concepts of many Americans was not without consequences. Membership in historical associations stagnated or declined (the American Historical Association had gained a great number of new members during the 1950s and 1960s but suffered heavy losses from 1973 to 1975). The number of history students at universities in the United States also declined. Even the output of scholarly publications seemed to be smaller in the 1970s. Certain branches of historical teaching and research lost followers, especially diplomatic history, the history of power politics, and historical biography. A stronger concentration of scholars on social history led to closer contacts between history and social sciences (which would be of no disadvantage had it not been accompanied by an estrangement of history from other disciplines such as literature, law and philosophy). Teaching history and historical research were not as highly respected in the society as before. Doubts arose about the importance of this discipline for the analysis and solution of the conflicts of the present.

In West Germany there were similar changes in historical concepts. There, too, it began with the breaking of taboos. Fritz Fischer's book Griff nach der Weltmacht, first published in 1961, had little in common with the views of Williams. It was not primarily devoted to social developments or economic interests; it followed conventional methods of interpretation. However, by critizing the national ambitions and war aims of Germany at the beginning of the First World War, traditional historical perspectives from the Pre-Hitler era, still cherished after the Second World War, were challenged. Many young Germans appreciated Fischer's new interpretation and welcomed it; some older historians, however, were shocked by a lack of national pride on Fischer's part.

Soon afterwards a revisionist school of historians began work similar to that pursued in the United States. Williams had his first disciple in Hans-Ulrich Wehler, who was followed by others. Bismarck was interpreted as an imperialist. The United States was charged with permanent imperialism, as in the United States itself. Great historians of the past underwent "debunking": Leopold von Ranke, Friedrich Meinecke, and Gerhard Ritter were accused of writing the history of social elites. Revisionists of the 1960s and 1970s demanded structural history, analysis of social developments and empirical methods. Sometimes one could even hear the argument that society was tired of history and should dismiss it as an unnecessary field of intellectual activity.

The consequences of the German phenomenon were particularly to be seen in school education and teaching directives drafted by boards of education. History in the schools was incorporated into a new field called Gemeinschaftskunde (social studies). Teaching history in chronological order was criticized. According to bureaucratic directives, social conflicts and changes were to be major subjects of history courses. In some West German states, such as Hesse and North Rhine-Westphalia, teachers were asked to frame their courses within new ideological concepts very close to materialism. Effects of the crisis of historical concepts were much stronger in school training than on the academic level and among the public. Professional historians and many parents protested vehemently against such political manipulation of history in education and blamed state administrations for distorting the past for political purposes.

What does history mean for us today? In brief, history is still, or again, very much alive. The great crisis has not killed it or even done permanent harm to it. I believe that I can say this with regard to both countries, although my insight into the American scene is limited and there might be differences in degree between the meaning of history in America and Germany.

As far as the United States is concerned, one can point to the reverberations of the bicentennial of the American Revolution, especially the spontaneous echo among the people which is more important for our question than the official one. Many people may have regarded the whole spectacle as artificial, commercially motivated, and repulsive. But even if one admits that this was true to a certain extent, much remains that can be described as serious interest in the past. Abuses of the bicentennial should not hide the fact that many Americans felt concerned about the historical developments in 1776, that they pondered the meaning of the year 1776 for the year 1976, and that they discussed the importance of 200 years of American history for their own country and for the world. All this was done in private conversation as well as in professional conferences: it happened officially and unofficially; and it proved that Americans live with their history, that they are ready to learn from it and profit from it in shaping their world of today and their future.

In order to show that history is also still alive in the Federal Republic, I would like to refer to a very different event. Germans have celebrated the American bicentennial too, but this was motivated more by a feeling of German-American partnership today than by a sense of history. But in the same year something without precedent occurred at the annual convention of the German Historical Association. The head of the Federal Republic, President Walter Scheel, gave the inaugural address and said the following words:

> "We are in danger of becoming a nation without history. I think that the situation of history education in our schools is precarious: not enough is done and what is done is too narrow in its conception and its methods. I have a favor to ask of you historians: Care about history education in our schools! Criticize it and make suggestions for its improvement! Promote it! The best historians with the most profound knowledge and the widest horizon should write the text books. The young generation cannot understand our country's system of freedom without knowing German history."

After this speech, at a reception, the president of the German Historical Association, Professor Werner Conze from the University of Heidelberg, was decorated with the highest

civil order of the Federal Republic, the Grosse Bundesverdienstkreuz.

At first sight, the words of the Federal President could be regarded as an admonition to professional historians to become more active in the public education. But this was not the meaning of his words. President Scheel's speech was not perceived as a prodding. The association, those assembled and many other historians in Germany, felt encouraged in what they had already been doing. Again and again the association and its members had protested against attempts of public education boards to suppress history in the schools or distort its content for political purposes. In vain, historians of universities had asked for co-determination in formulating directives and recommendations for history teaching in the schools. The speech of Scheel was an assurance of cooperation between the public and the profession against anti-historical trends in education.

There are other facts indicating that history is alive in West Germany. Membership in historical associations is growing--not drastically, but steadily. Participation in historical publications is constantly growing, if I am not mistaken in my personal estimate (statistics were not available). Mass media pay more and more attention to historical subjects, particularly in television programs where much time is given to historical films and documentation. A growing number of university students study history. In the University of Hamburg students who want to become history teachers have increased in number by 65 per cent in three years (from 1973 to 1976), while the increase of students in all fields of teaching only amounted to 29 per cent. Contrary to these indications history teaching in high schools is still rather poor. But this is not to be explained by a lack of interest on the students' side. It is due to an education policy detached from the world.

An article of the Frankfurter Allgemeine (2-25-1977) commenting on the state of liberal arts in the Federal Republic states: "West German ministries of culture seem to have a strange talent for being behind contemporary trends. The Minister of Culture in Hesse, Krollmann, recently published the draft of a bill for senior high school-reform providing that history can be taught no longer as a field of its own, but as a supplement to social education. As far as research in universities in concerned, the trend already looks quite different." The author of the article then refers to "our times' favorite", historically oriented liberal arts. Even in social sciences historical interpretations are gaining ground. In liberal arts a "feeling of crisis" has been replaced by a "critical self-consciousness". Successfully proven methods of historical analysis have increased in value. The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Association), a semi-public agency distributing funds to researchers and institutions, is spending considerable amounts for projects in liberal arts.

Comparing these modern trends with the gloomy situation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the come-back of history is remarkable. Perhaps the pendulum has not swung back quite as far in the United States as in West Germany, but the trends are the same. How is this to be explained? I have two answers.

First the crisis of ten years ago was not as grave as some people have thought and asserted. It was certainly strange that even historians despaired of the future of their profession. They should have known better than anybody else that interest in the past has always been a basic need in western civilization, that the intensity of this need has had its ups and downs through thousands of years, but that the need itself has never been regarded as expendible. Why should the opposite have been the case in the 1960s? The historians' panic probably resulted from their excessive self-assurance in the 1950s. They had forgotten that doubts about the importance of historical orientation and about the methods and interpretations of historians had been raised from time to time before, perhaps in the United States with its future-oriented society more than in Germany, but occasionally in Germany too.

However, I should not deny that there was reason for concern ten years ago. In both countries historians were rightfully afraid that a young generation would be raised without historical education and that their capacity for political judgment would then be very narrow. They were not only concerned about future professional positions but worried about the education of the citizens of the future.

Second, the crisis of historical conceptions--or whatever it really was--did not only distort history ideologically and narrow the historical horizon. With some people this still may be the case. But on the whole, historical perspectives have been widened, certain taboos and clichés have been removed, methods and interpretations have become more pluralistic. The historical biographer will take the social environment of his hero into consideration more than before. The historian of international relations will look at diplomacy as an activity reflecting domestic and world-wide interests, conditions and movements, and not so much as an isolated component of history. Political, social, and economic historians will be increasingly aware that they are working on components of a complex development the over-all structure of which they have to study too.

The methods and tools of historians have also been enriched and diversified. Hermeneutic understanding and eclecticism should not be outmoded. However, historians should first look around and see what methods of research and interpretation are most appropriate for a given subject. If quantitative methods are suitable they should be applied. If methods of social sciences can help to clarify the past they should be used. The general trend is moving toward interdisciplinary work--an old demand which is taken more seriously today. But that does not mean that history can be considered merely a part of a vaguely defined conglomerate of teaching and research. Modern society needs to learn from the past, it needs a good understanding of its historical background, and knows that familiarity with traditions is a precondition of constructive life today and in the future. People in the United States and in the Federal Republic are obviously aware of this.

DISCUSSION

Presiding: Bernard Sheehan, History, Indiana University.
Discussants: Charles T. Barber, Political Science, Indiana State University, Evansville;
Günter Kutscha, Economics Education, Ruhr-University, Bochum;
Günter Moltmann, History, University of Hamburg

Sheehan: Thank you, Professor Moltmann. Would you distinguish the common wisdom that people hold about their past, which we usually call a sense of history, from the academic version of the subject?
Moltmann: They are certainly not the same. I should begin by saying that I first planned a long methodological introduction, but because of the length and complexity of the subject I discarded the idea. It's very difficult to give an overall picture of the meaning of history. You can think of the nostalgic interest in history which is very common in society, or of academic research which is something very different. You may search for the signs of interest in history. There are some indicators, but each one is only part of the truth. For instance, compare the money that is spent for the preservation of historical monuments in both countries and the percentage of the national income used for that purpose. Or one could carefully compare curricula in schools. You may ask whether the expenditure of money for the preservation of historical monuments reveals an interest in history or depends on certain esthetic values. People preserve historical monuments because they like to look at them. It does not necessarily mean that there is an interest in history. This is a big question and does not lend itself to a simple solution.
Barber: You talked a great deal about a sense of the past that seems to be monumental in nature in both the trivial and elevated sense of it. Do you see anything besides a pluralism of method, a kind of eclecticism developing? Do you see beyond that any kind of historical vision in either the U.S. or the West German society that would replace the 19th century faith in progress? Is history going anywhere except onward? Are there any missions for our nations to achieve or accomplish any longer or are we just sort of muddling through and making a record of it?
Moltmann: I would hesitate to say that there are no visions, yet I'm not sure that a mission to fulfill, on the basis of history, would be a very good thing. But on the other hand I would not say that it is just muddling through, just triviality. If people, particularly young people, are interested in history, not to obtain a mission, but to find some orientation for their own existence, if they get a certain concept of what human beings can be, what they have been in history, much will have been achieved. I would be very reluctant to promote missions and visions. We have enough of that in Germany and perhaps in the U.S. too. Visions can yield terrible results.
Barber: Does that mean then that history just gives meaning to our private lives, that there are no public policies or public missions to be achieved any more?
Moltmann: As a historian I would like to say that history gives a much wider orientation for the understanding of one's self. But since history is concerned with public developments --political, economic, and social-- it also shows what a society can do. History can be very informative for considerations leading to political decisions.
Kutscha: You spoke very abstractly about history. I believe that people are more interested in a history that concerns a life situation, that is the history of social groups, and as a part of social education. You spoke very skeptically about history within the realm of social studies. Could you give some arguments for your position.

Moltmann: I did not criticize the integration of history into social studies or social education. I spoke of the integration of history into Gemeinschaftskunde. I used the German word, because I don't think that the concept of the Gemeinschaftskunde can be understood in the sense of social education. I agree with you that studying history is studying society, and teaching history is social education. But this concept of the Gemeinschaftskunde is much narrower. History is only used as a reservoir of examples. It is not taught as development. Many students who come to the university and have been trained in this manner, have no concept of what has happened. They don't even know, let's take an example, how the Third Reich came into being. They know that it existed, and they know that it was terrible. History can teach how it came into being, the causes and the consequences, and this is missing in the concept of Gemeinschaftskunde. It is a conglomerate of sociology, economics, history, and geography with no clear educational objective. Of course, teachers of different disciplines might cooperate by giving lectures together and exchanging ideas. This will achieve much more than a vague new field in school teaching. But, certainly history in a wider sense is part of the social sciences and social education.

HISTORY STUDY GROUP

Presiding: Bernard Sheehan, History, Indiana University.
Discussants: Götz Fehr, Inter Nationes, Bonn-Bad Godesberg (FRG); Richard Kirkendall, History, Indiana University; Liliane Krasean, French and Italian, Indiana University; Friederich Mielke, Comparative Literature, Indiana University; Günter Moltmann, History, University of Hamburg (FRG); Wolfgang Schlauch, History, Eastern Illinois University; Dieter Schmidt-Sinns, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Bonn (FRG); Olaf Schwencke, M.P., Bundeshaus, Bonn (FRG); Robert J. Wiggers, Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corp., Evansville, Indiana; Philip J. Wolfson, Dept. of State, Washington, D.C.

Sheehan: This is the second session of the history section of the German Studies Conference. Our object, as I see it, is to elucidate some of the explanations offered yesterday by Prof. Moltmann in his paper. For the purpose of provoking discussion I have formulated a number of questions. Let me begin with my statement. Prof. Moltmann has touched upon a number of important aspects of a quite complex question. My own thinking on the matter is in no sense contrary to his. Rather, I find the task of thinking through the implications of so many trends and developments more bewildering than satisfying. Perhaps this is inevitable. I take it that history is all-inclusive. To know its content, to perceive the full substance of the experience of any society is to know the self of that society, a tall order never quite achieved. Societies like human beings may struggle to know themselves; they may have a genuine interest in self-revelation. But mostly, I suspect, societies are satisfied with a minimal understanding of their past, with just enough information, well packaged, to support the values that give stability and a sense of hope. One surely might argue that just as self-revelation in psychological therapy is the road to maturity, to a stable personality, historical understanding spread widely throughout a society is the surest path to a healthy social order, at least historians would seem to have a vested interest in this belief and expend vast energies

in attemptying to convince their fellow-countrymen of the advantages of its implementation. Yet, apparently the truth of the principle and the advantages of its realization are not apparent to everyone. Historians meet resistance in their efforts to awaken the historical imaginations of their countrymen. As I see it, that in a general way this is the theme of Prof. Moltmann's paper. Here are my questions. First, what is the connection between social stability and historical understanding? Would a society under the influence of historians be more stable, more just, than one run by, say, the politicians who hold power in the western democracies nowadays? Should a distinction be made between the academic history practiced by scholars in universities and the common wisdom of a society about its past held broadly and vaguely by its members? In this connection, it has long struck me that the various interpretations of the American Revolution put forward by historians since the days of George Bancroft have made virtually no impact on the conventional perception of that event. Washington is still the hero, and George III the villan. The British remain the agents of tyranny, the Americans the apostles of liberty. Perhaps the reasons for the resistance to historical sophistication lie deep in the needs of a society. One can only guess what the outcome would be if Americans came to believe that their revolution was unjustified. Moreover, has the history of the U.S. really been as free of deep-seated changes as some historians have been inclined to believe? True, there have been no changes in regime comparable to the experiences of Germany noted by Prof. Moltmann. But, there has been defeat: the South in 1865, the nation in 1975. Moreover, one might argue that the very substance of American life has been instability. Americans have always been an extraordinarily unsettled people. Expansion and mobility have been the deepest American experiences. And connected with this point apropos the unsettled character of American life, some 40 million immigrants may have been assimilated into American society, but never so completely that they lost their ethnic identification. A dominant theme of American history has been the incorporation of these people into the Anglo-Saxon mold. But, the facts have always belied the wish. The immigrants in some measure remained immigrants. The question remains then of what consequences immigration and the unsettled character of America have visited upon the American sense of history.

For Americans the Revolution was doubtless the critical event in their history, but for their perception of themselves it may well have left an ambiguous heritage. Americans tend at the same time to be loyal to the values established in the Revolution and guilty about their failure to realize those values. The ideology of the Revolution crystalized a powerful utopian impulse in American life that has been the source of endless anxiety and discontent. Is it possible then to argue that the historical mindedness of at least some Americans has led not to a coalescence of society but to the conviction that American society has failed in its commitment to equality and democracy, that is to universal values?

Perhaps the most difficult problem of all is to reconcile the American sense of mission with an historical conciousness. Americans, at least most Americans who think publicly, have generally been devotees of the party of hope, not the parties of memory or irony. They have seen the American enterprise as a revolt against the corruption of Europe, in a sense against history itself. Hence, the idea of an American sense of history must be reconciled with the American habit of denying the validity of history. If Americans were really determined to transform the world into an equaliterian and democratic paradise, what place would history have in such a scheme?

It would appear that both Germany and the U.S. have witnessed a decline in patriotism in recent years. Loyalty to old heroes has faded, and with it has come a serious crisis

of self-confidence. Perhaps in Germany this can be attributed to the catastrophe of National Socialism and the later assault of the Left on old institutions. But the U.S., and for that matter the West as a whole, suffered no such disaster. To what are we to attribute the decline of patriotism in the U.S.? More important, what is the relationship, if any, between loyalty to the fatherland, or the mother country, and a sense of history? Do Americans go to museums like Colonial Williamsburg because they possess a lively affinity for their past, or is it because they have no past and hope to find one in a neatly, reconstructed 18th century town that has covered over the scars of the actual past? Doubtless, places like Williamsburg can be educational, as can courses taught in school or on the road to the Ph.D. But I wonder how much such knowledge will contribute to the creation of a deep loyalty to one's society. Is there not a distinction to be made between knowledge of the past and faith in the society that emerged from that past?

The consequences of the revisionism of the '60s were in some sense at least political. Historians wrote with a conscious intention of changing the attitudes of Americans on certain issues and with a broader ideological intention of transforming the basic loyalty of Americans. History became an instrument of policy formation and social criticism. Although this appeared to be new in the American experience, it may have been only some of the old American wine in new bottles. Is it unfair to interpret the history taught in our schools as itself instrumental, that is designed to stimulate patriotism and loyalty to the social order. The New Left attacked the content, but it did not attack the form. It is an open question whether history has really recovered from the '60s. The Bicentennial certainly stimulated some interests, but the enrollment statistics are still down. Is this because the anti-historical impulse of that decade persists? Perhaps the current proclivity for the practical will prove as deadly to the historical sense as the utopian impulse of the past era. It seems much more simple to identify the enemies of history than to single out its friends. Hence, the question remains unanswered: what social climate is most conducive to the cultivation of historical knowledge? Or it may be that the question is best put, what kind of history can best serve the stability and justice of the social order.

Those are the questions that came to my mind in reading Prof. Moltmann's paper. I wonder if some of them might provoke discussion from you.

Schmidt-Sinns: May I say, Mr. Moltmann, that I felt a bit provoked by some of the statements you delivered and by the views you expressed concerning German attitudes toward history. Allow me please to add to the picture. I'd like to put forward one thesis and that is: nobody, as far as I know, wanted to do away with history. The only title of this approach I can remember is "Let's Abolish History Courses," and the author, Strombesley, was an American, not a German. Even Marxists, as everyone knows, make use of history, very intensive use of history, and so the accusation that the "Social Studies Guidelines" of Hesse were Marxist and that they aimed at abolishing history, is altogether unfair. I don't see any logic in it. May I say that I am not a defender of the Hesse Guidelines. This is not my approach, and I think they have serious deficiences. You spoke of the guidelines of North Rhine-Westphalia too. Now these guidelines deal with political science, and say nothing about history. I think this criticism does not lead very far. Nor does the counting of history students, because everyone knows that we don't need more history teachers in the decades before us. I am afraid that the numbers of history students in Germany will diminish very shortly. A representative of a "Bundesland," of Rhineland-Palatinate told me that at the moment we don't need any history teachers. By 1990 we need about 120. That is not very many.

Now you quoted Federal President Walter Scheel, I could quote Gustav Heinemann, who said that the schoolbooks in Germany should be re-written because they mainly deal with the history of great men, and they miss the description of democratic traditions which indeed can be found in German history. I think two questions should be answered. One, is history a social science? Is it to be regarded as a social science? For instance, in the sense of the French structuralists, or in the sense of Franz Ulrich Wehler, whom you quoted. Or do we stick, or do you stick perhaps, to the ideals of historicism? You alluded to the great men, or to the lack of interest in history of heroes, and our Chairman in his introduction quoted the same issue. Is history to give a sense of patriotism and loyalty to national heroes? Is this the main sense of history? Furthermore, this question applies to history as a school subject, but of course there are interrelations between history as a university discipline and the school subject. Now the question is: Is history to be preserved as an isolated subject at school? If yes, I do not see how you can teach topics as environmental problems, the Third World, peace and security, or however you may take the problems which are vital for our future. Now, I think either you leave out the historical dimension in all these issues relevant to our future, or you have to realize an integration which by no means should be the abolition of history.

Moltmann: Well, we have some ten questions. They are very general nature and they could be discussed regarding both countries. And, then you all have the text of my lectures of yesterday. Perhaps I should start with the latter.

Schmidt-Sinns: I didn't mean it as an attack, you know.

Moltmann: I did not say that Germans wanted to do away with history, and I did not say that the government in Hesse and North Rhine-Westphalia wanted to do away with history completely. But, looking at the curricula of the schools, looking even at the curricula of some universties like Kassel, you cannot deny that history is not regarded as a subject with its own methods and its own educational goals. It's a field where one may find examples of social order, social changes, social developments. But, gradually, history declines. There are other states where you can see the opposite tendency. If you compare only Schleswig-Holstein and Hesse, you see the difference. I'm not an advocat of Schleswig-Holstein, but there you can see that history plays a much bigger role in schools and will be even more stressed in future years in accordance with official policy. This is not the case in Hesse.

There are certain connections between the New Left and Marxist ideas, but I intended a more inclusive argument. The marxists are interested in history, but they have their own idea of how to interpret history. The Marxist revolutionaries of the 1960s and '70s were interested in history, only in a specific way. But this is not the main source of the antagonism against history. You say we don't need more history teachers in the future. I don't know how you have arrived at this judgment.

Schmidt-Sinns: We have enough, you see.

Moltmann: No, we don't. Of course, this depends on the curricula. If you do away with history teaching in schools, you don't need them. The trouble is that we don't need many new teachers in any fields. We have fewer students because of a decline in the birth rate, and we will need fewer of teachers in the future. But look at the relative need for history teachers compared with the need of teachers in all fields, I don't think the need for history teachers is less acute than for other teachers.

Schmidt-Sinns: I think that history has been a very popular subject and consequently we have no teacher shortage here, in fact there is an over supply.

Moltmann: Well, we have no exact figures. When I prepared my lecture I thought, of course, of Heinemann. He saw the need for history, just as Walter Scheel did. But his interest was

mainly in changing the concept of German history. He proposed that professional historians study social revolutions in Germany. And this was justified to a certain extent. On the other hand, historians answered that they had never neglected social change. But, this point is not so important for what I said. I quoted the lecture of Walter Scheel because it included such an outspoken statement on the necessity of teaching history. This was not what Heinemann meant.

As for historicism, it is a slogan which should be carefully defined before we talk about it. It is used for all sorts of things. I'm not in favor of isolationg history from other fields. I have also been strongly in favor of cooperation between the fields. But I am against the idea of giving up one's own methodological principles, and I would warn against using history simply as a means to explain other things. The crisis is more serious in literature. This discipline has to explain social developments at the expense for instance of the aesthetic values of poetry. But this is not the subject here.

I think we need interdisciplinary work. I would not be against teaching Gemeinschafts-kunde in German schools if history had its real place in it, if there was real cooperation between different fields. But, in Germany they have picked a little bit out of each field and you see the results. Students come from the university with little knowledge of history. And, not only that, they feel a need to become informed about history. Just this morning I talked with Dr. Kurzrock from the RIAS station in Berlin. He told me that every historical program receive a strong response from the public and particularly from young people. And not only that, if they offer lectures of historical plays outside the radio programs, they are assured of a large audience of young people. There is no question, young people are historically interested more than they have been in the past.

Wolgang Schlauch: You mentioned in your talk yesterday that there was a decline of history from 1970 to 1975 in both countries. And, we still experience a decline here in the U.S. while there seems to be an increase of interest in history in Germany. Why is this decline still continuing? I'm not only speaking of the history-major enrollment but of the general interest in history. What are the factors in this decline? To what extent is it connected to the lack of patriotism, or decline of patriotism? And, to what extent is the increase related to an increase of patriotism, which has not been prevalent in post war German society. Hence what are the reasons for the increase in Germany and the decline in the U.S.?

Moltmann: I talked about the development of membership in the American Historical Association and the German Historical Association. Those are very different associations. The German association is an association of professional historians, teachers and professional historians from the universities. And, the American Historical Association takes in everybody. It is at least supposed to be a popular association if you read the by-laws, and therefore it is much bigger than the German association. You have about 20,000 members with a population of over 200 million. In Germany we have about 1500 to 2000 members and we have a population of about 60 million. The membership of the American Association is going up too, as far as I know. I checked the annual reports from 1975 for the year 1974. And, there was an obvious decline from 20,000 to 18,000 in 1972 or 1973. This decline is not as steep now. In 1974, there was a decline of 100 members. This is one indicator, though it certainly does not explain everything. This is one of the methodological problems one has to face when talking about the development of the interest in history in a nation.

Sheehan: In part, the decline might be explained by a downturn in the economy. There were fewer jobs available for historians in those days. I had not heard that the Organization

of American Historians, which is the group that people interested in American history would generally be associated with, had suffered any serious decline even when the price was increased recently.

Schmidt-Sinns: I think it's very difficult to find out in which ways historical interests grow and manifest themselves. In the Federal Republic there is a tremendous interest, a public interest, in visiting museums with historical expositions, for instance, the Cologne Museum of the Roman Times, the Staufer Exhibition in Stuttgart, and films with historical content.

Schlauch: Also novels.

Schmidt-Sinns: Yes, on the bookmarket there is a tremendous output of historical subjects. But, together with this trend goes, as I think, dislike of the subject of history at school. All findings prove this and the question arises why students do not like history. My explanation is that history has practically no relevance to their present existence. I am speaking of my own children, of history classes. And so I think another approach to history, which would show the interrelations between history and the present, would help a lot. I don't know if you think history should be taught chronologically at school. Some of your words pointed in that direction. There may be some courses which give an overview, of course. Or there must be some courses even. But, there must be other courses, I think, which deal with certain topics and which find their question in the present. I wanted to underline the approach of Hans Süssmuth, which is diachronic. I'd like to invite you to my lecture tomorrow where I will show a film produced by the NDR, North German Radio together with the Federal Center for Political Education about the nineteenth century. In this we have abandoned chronology and have tried to ask the relevant questions that go back into history. For instance, nationalism is questioned with some interviews before the cup final between Holland and West Germany. They asked people: Why should your nation win? What is your nation? And, then you see the relevance of nationalism and then you go back to the French Revolution. This is an attempt, at least, to make history more relevant to people now.

Moltmann: I don't think there is a dislike of history in schools. Although I must admit that my own children don't like history courses. But, I would not make such a broad statement on the basis of the dislike of history by my own children. To really measure the interest of high school students in history classes, you must have schools where they have a choice. This is the case in the upper classes of the high schools in most German States. Yet, there you can see the same changing pattern. In the early 1970's there was a decline in the interest of high school students in taking these courses which they didn't have to take. But now I believe you will find an increase of interest, though we have no exact figures. We talk of personal impressions.

Schmidt-Sinns: There have been questionnaires and there have been exact figures. I know some of them, but I can't quote them now.

Moltmann: From what I've heard from the schools in Hamburg -- that's where I live and get most of my information -- I wouldn't agree that there is a general dislike of history courses. This, of course, always depends on the way a course is taught, on the personality of the teacher, and on other facors such as grading practices. So, one really would have to measure these factors and look at the whole schene in Germany. Fortunately we have someone here who can tell us about the development of the membership of the Organization of American Historians.

Kirkendall: I don't have the numbers in my mind, but I know the trend. The trend is down after a period of stability. I moved into my job as Executive Secretary of the organization in 1973 and we'd already moved onto a plateau. We stayed there until this past year, and

for the first time dropped off that plateau.

Sheehan: Is that attributable to the raise in dues?

Kirkendall: No, the raise in charges went through and resulted in no drop. And, then in the second year, I guess, a drop took place. I think that it is a result of problems in the profession. We are also losing subscribers to the Journal of American History as well because libraries are also having trouble.

Sheenan: You would not then attribute that to a decline in interest in history?

Kirkendall: A Breakdown published in our newsletter recently indicates where the changes have taken place. There is some drop in student members, and I think that relates to, if not a loss of interest, at least a decline of devotion to the study of history. But the sharpest drop is in the category of historians 10,000 to 15,000 a year. This is essentially the assistant professor category. And, I think in part it is because of promotions. People are moving up, so they move into a higher dues category. And, in part it is because of decline in the number of people appointed on the assistant professor level. And, that relates to overall budgetary problems in universities and to decisions in that budgetary situation that frequently are going against history because enrollment in history is falling off.

Moltmann: Do you know something about the American Historical Association too?

Kirkendall: It is a little hard to work with the American Historical Associations figures because there is a new rigor in handling their membership rolls. They are down a bit, but how much of that decline is a result of a new administration that gets rid of people who aren't paying their dues more quickly and how much of it is a real drop, is not clear to me. My predecessor computerized our membership list and dealt rigorously with people who weren't paying their dues, so we experienced a drop before I came into office simply because people were dropped from the list so that our figures now of the last few years are more meaningful.

Bob Wiggers: I am really here under false pretense: I am not a historian, but a history teacher and I am very much interested in the comments made here. It seems to me, first, that we have failed to identify at what level we are speaking about these children who have no interest in history. Now we have referred to high school. Are you talking about the Gymnasium? We have nothing comparable. Our high school is an entirely different thing. What we have here is a mishmash. It is true that we have very many who have no interest in history, but they have very little interest in anything. This is not I feel, any reflection on history. It is manifestly impossible to teach not only the discipline of history but even the appreciation of it to those below a certain intellectual level. And yet this is what the state of Indiana tells us that we must do. Now, many years ago we have done what you did. We created social studies and we have lost the discipline of geography almost completely. History has become socialized to a great extent. Yet, history still, it seems, is not in itself uninteresting to people of a sufficient level of understanding, at least among the teenagers we have spoken about. Now, if we can't teach the discipline in the strict sense we can instill an interest in history, despite the inadequacy of teacher training at the the university level where we train our teachers in methodology, leaving out almost completely the discipline. Literature teachers who have no understanding of the period which they are teaching are lost. I feel strongly with you, Herr Moltmann, that we must have the discipline of history at the center of our teaching.

Friederich Mielke: I am a German graduate student at Indiana University. I would just like to give an example of the state of knowledge of history in college students here at Indiana University. I teach as an associate instructor a section called "Modern Literature and the Arts" in the Comparative Literature program and we always come to one painting by David of Napoleon crossing the Alps. And, at the bottom of the painting there are these

two names, Hannibal and Charlemagne. Everytime we come to that painting, our point there is to explain that neoclassism is interested very much in history and the idealization and glorification of the individual, Napoleon. But, then we ask why would David put Hannibal and Charlemagne on the painting? We have about regularly 25 sophmores, juniors, some of them are seniors. Perhaps one or two would know that there had been a similar invasion of Italy by one of those two before and a crossing of the Alps by the other. The historical knowledge is lacking; we always have to start from scratch when we discuss those paintings. And, secondly, ten years ago I was an exchange student in an American high school. I took American History and also World History. The material was extremely superficial. When we came to the First World War, I had learned enough in the Gymnasium to teach the class.

Wiggers: This is the difference I an speaking about. We are speaking about two different levels.

Schmidt-Sinns: This leads us to the question: What is really relevant to the student? What you said about crossing the Alps in ancient times applies to a certain ideal of classical education. You are regarded as educated when you know that Hannibal crossed the Alps and threatened the Romans. Now, what does it mean to us? I am afraid nothing. It doesn't mean anything to an average child sitting in front of you in the benches. Hannibal is just a name, and if they have a good history teacher, they weave a story around it and then it becomes vivid. But, what does it actually mean to their lives? I say, nothing.

Moltmann: Invasion and conquest of another country?

Schmidt-Sinns: If you speak of invasion in general, or war in general --which is extremely vital for us-- you find examples, and then we come to history as a query, your argument against this attitude towards history. If you are taught by history what a war really is, and what evil it does to mankind, and what the reasons of war are, or the history of mankind is, a history of wars. These are vital questions and should be thought about and taught about.

But, not the Hannibal crossing the Alps in 200 or so before Christ. This is irrelevant.

Sheehan: You see history then as a kind of clothes closet; you take from it whatever you wish and put on what you want for the moment.

Schmidt-Sinns: No. The problem is that there should be scientists or historians who of course should know history. But, you cannot teach this, you have to give examples, you have to take only parts of history for teaching in the class.

Sheehan: But, that would not be history, that would just be snippets of past knowledge.

Schmidt-Sinns: Do you think that you can give a totality of history? History always is a selection of things. You can't give a totality of history. This is absolutely impossible. And, even the most educated historian has only a certain outlook, he knows only parts of history.

Sheehan: You could say that about any discipline. In fact, I think you must say it about any discipline, but that does not mean that in any discipline you don't have an obligation to present a reasonable portrayal of some of the elements of its fullness. To simply say that you may use history as you choose for some instrumental necessity would seem to me to deny quite basically the validity of history.

Schmidt-Sinns: What is this? What is the validity of history?

Sheehan: It seems to me the validity of history has to do with an examination of the human condition as it has existed in time and place. And, that means getting some fullness of how human beings have experienced time and place. To say that one must simply know snippets of knowledge, for example, Hannibal or Charlemagne in Italy, is, I

agree, not very useful. But, to know the history of the Carolingian Empire cannot be but useful because you will know something profound about the character of European civilization.

Schmidt-Sinns: Yes, I would agree.

Sheehan: And, that is not necessarily an instrumental approach to the question.

Moltmann: If you want to use the invasion of Italy by Caesar or by Hannibal, you have to look for the causes and the consequences, and then you are in chronological history. Then, of course, you can't go very far, you can just look for the immediate causes. But, this shows that you cannot really teach history if you don't use chronology as a pre-condition of understanding history. I do not favor chronological causes of history only. But I think if the students just pick out this and that, or teachers pick out this and that to demonstrate something, then they don't understand much of what they are talking about. Because we have to see the connections between different periods. We have to understand the mentality, or the concepts of Charlemagne, or of Hannibal, or Caesar, to understand what they were doing. It seems to me dangerous for some modern educators to think they teach history if they do it just under certain general headlines and just use, as you said, history as a query. Then , it's not history teaching any more. Then, they subordinate history to their own explanation of their own society. If you don't know how the society came into existence, if you don't ask about the causes, then you don't understand it at all. Asking about causes is chronological interest in history.

Schlauch: I would also disagree with you. I think that the crossing of the Alps by Hannibal and Charlemagne can be very relevant to a child of thirteen or fourteen. He or she can identify, to some extent, with that civilization because today 20 or 30 million Europeans go across the Alps every year. They are confronted with the Italian culture, or with other cultures. Also, I doubt that a child on a lower level can absorb highly sophisticated sociological or economic interpretations. Hannibal or Charlemagne might serve as a basis to explain society, to explain Carolongian culture. You must have some figure; you must have some kind of historical basis. So I think, especially for a German child, Charlemagne or Hannibal can become very relevant.

Schmidt-Sinns: I agree with you that we should try to give a certain perspective on world history, a certain outlook on the history of the peoples. But, this history cannot be a history of heroes but a history of society. I do not believe that the history of events we are teaching achieves this. The thinnings out of history during four, five, or six years of two lessons per week does not give the great view of world or universal history because there are too many events which are very easily forgotten by the student. But, now we are coming into methodical questions.

Krasean: I am in the French Department here at IU and I was educated in France. The education there is similar to the one in Germany. But, history is taught as a compulsory topic so that we have it from the elementary onward through the last year of high school, which is equivalent to the Gymnasium. Maybe we don't remember much by the end, but we do build up every year. Starting with the medieval the students then go on to France and to the different countries of the world in their relationship with each other, and the wars among nations coming to the 1960s in the last year. They do build up an historical imagination , maybe not sociological, but historical imagination. It is important that there be a continuous curriculum. Unfortunately, Indiana does not have a continuous curriculum.

Sheehan: I would like to invite Prof. Kirkendall, who is executive Secretary of the Organization of American Historians and has been involved in discussions concerning teaching of history in American schools, to say a word.

Kirkendall: Let me describe very quickly an effort that we have made in the Organization of American Historians to find out what is going on concerning history in the schools

and colleges. I guess the best suggestion to make at the outset is that our picture of things is less optimistic, less positive than Prof. Moltmann presents in his paper. We see the downturn that he sees in what we call the status of history in the late '60s, early '70s, but we do not yet see the recovery taking place. We established, after the downturn had taken place, a committee composed of at least one member in each state who attempted, in what I must admit were rather unsystematic ways, to find out just what had been happening, both in the schools and in the colleges. And, then we followed up on that initial effort, which was made in 1974-1975 and published in the fall of 1975, with two supplementary surveys, one attempting to compare the situation in the beginning of the academic year 1974 with the beginning of 1975, and then this past academic year with the year before it. As far as the secondary schools are concerned, our picture is not as clearly defined as I would like it to be. It is a little hard for us to find out precisely what is going on in the secondary schools. When we inquire about the state of history, one person insists that it is very healthy and another person insists that it is not healthy at all, and they may be looking at the very same thing. But it does appear that in some places there was a move away from history as it existed in the schools a decade ago and before. In most places history still is a mandated subject, with the force of state law behind it very frequently. But in a few places those mandates have been repealed in the past decade, and similar rules governing education in history on the part of potential teachers have also been changed so that people can teach history with only a very limited amount of training in it. And, in addition, there has been this kind of fusion that Prof. Moltmann talked about with other things. In some places, perhaps in the best financed schools, history has been subordinated to the social studies. When those of us with a more or less traditional point of view look at what is going on, it doesn't seem to be historical study. At most, history is being used as query, which is a legitimate use of it, but I also think that since history has virtues of its own it needs to be taught in ways that bring thise virtues to the attention of students. And so there are some signs of a loss of status in the secondary schools, but it would appear that the loss has not been nearly as substantial as in the colleges.

History enrollments were growing throughout the 1960s, not as rapidly as college enrollments in general but they still were doing rather well in most places and overall. Then a sharp decline began around 1970. In the past few years the decline has slowed except for some states and some institutions. In others stability has set in. A few places have experienced a slight upturn. But the national picture in the colleges and universities seems to suggest that the status of history has stabilized at a rather low level. We do not yet, on the basis of the kinds of studies we have been making, see the recovery that the paper sees and especially as the paper sees in West Germany. The report has been a widely critized report. It has driven me into more controversoy than anything I have done as a research scholar. It's drawn me to meetings of the social studies people especially, in which they have asked me to have my say and then made me the target. The experience has been rather stimulating for me. And, there have also been some criticisms of our report that relate very significantly to this paper. None has pressed this point very hard; it's hinted at by a number of people who have commented to me and commented elsewhere about our studies. And, it's hinted at enough to force me to struggle with the problem. The point is, there's a good deal of evidence that there is a popular interest in history. The media provide us with a great deal of evidence on that, and we have many other bodies of evidence. Certainly, the media have been paying an enormous amount of attention to history lately with Eleanor and Franklin, the various things of Harry Truman, Joe McCarthy, the Adams Chronicles, and Roots, and so on. And, I've been trying to struggle with those two different bodies of evidence: the evidence that we have about the loss of status and the evidence coming from the media about widespread popular

interest. Our critics would suggest that we are doing very badly in the schools and colleges, and therefore, the people are turning elsewhere for versions of history that are more exciting and interesting. My tendency is to feel that the media presentations are in many cases dominated by mythology. The Truman programs for example, certainly are nothing but myths about Truman. They are filled with errors. Often, if they draw upon research, they draw upon research that is a decade old and has been displaced by more recent research. The Truman at Potsdam episode is a major example of that. It uses research that no historian, revisionist or non-revisionist, accepts anymore. Or they present artistically satisfying, but historically quite unsatisfying presentations. Eleanor and Franklin is a major example of that. One would think after watching Eleanor and Franklin that the biggest event in their lives was the affair with Lucy Mercer, that the main story to be told about Eleanor and Franklin was that they failed in their personal lives. Little is offered about the public lives of these two people. I am encouraged by the fact that the person who is presently writing the biography of Douglas MacArthur has been employed by MGM and is spending the year in Hollywood as an historical adviser. But that kind of thing doens't happen very often in this country. They would rather turn to Merl Miller for historical advice than someone who has made an effort to study the story.

Sheehan: I had a recent experience with the media and I think I would support what you say. If we're doing badly as academics in making history interesting and meaningful, I would dread what the media will do. They're not really much interested in listening to things that they don't care to hear. They know what they want usually. And, they can always find someone who will tell them that.

Kirkendall: One of the reviewers of the latest thing on Huey Long suggested that the historians might be unhappy with this version, but then went on to assert that that's not important. Television exists to entertain. And this is a very entertaining film, the reviewer said, and that's praise enough.

Phil Wolfson: Of the Department of State, at least I have technical credentials. I am a history PhD from the University of Chicago of some 25 years non-standing, so to speak. I have been in the government instead all those years. There is always the question that is raised whenever criticism, very legitimate criticism of the type you have made just now, is put forward. After all, it's said, we must understand, even if we don't really forgive, the distortions for the sake of entertainment that come through in the media and that horrify the professional historian or even the lay historian. They may somehow serve an educational purpose by awakening an interest in subject matter which then causes some listeners --mostly younger generation-- to look further and to begin to read into the problem and then, so to speak, indirectly become educated. Do you see any tendency among your students to become educated by this backdoor method?

Kirkendall: Well, I think that the media presentations do generate interest. Secondary school teachers especially tell me that the media presentations generate interest among their students. The unfortunate side of it is that most of us have solid knowledge in some areas and not in others, and we as teachers frequently are not in a very strong position to comment on the weaknesses of particular media presentations. Take my own field, for example. There's much more enthusiasm for "give 'em Hell Harry" on the part of teachers than there should be.

Wolfson: They are emotionally involved.

Kirkendall: Yes, and they are not aware of the major distortions in that presentation. I watched the Adams Chronicles, but I'm not in a good position to point out its defects. Maybe if we could find some way to have qualified people, as well as newspaper and media commentators, provide appraisals of these historical presentations, we could accomplish much more.

Wolfson: If I may pursue the point. What strikes me about this is not so much whether people get more interested as a result of these TV presentations but, rather what sort of effect the TV presentations have. I'm thinking in particular of the program Fall of Eagles. It's broadcast in the Washington area and perhaps elsewhere. This is a series which is now running for the second or third time, which shows the decline of the great dynasties of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe. It portrays all sorts of intimate scenes, between the Emperor and poor Rudolph, and of course the women playing almost a stereotype role, either vicious or knuckle-headed, always beautiful, and Bismarck, who stands out there as a distorted monument. You see, they even found Kurt Jürgens to play him, who's almost as big as Bismarck was. Of course, Bismarck remains a controversial figure to this day , in spite of all the first-rate historical attention he's been given, but this is just as phony a picture of him. But that, you see, it comes from PBS, or wherever. This is not to be dismissed as just American bunko. This is "the real things you see, but it's not, it's phonier than the other stuff. That, I think is a real problem.

Kirkendall: Yes, whenever I've talked to those people in public broadcasting about historical subjects, I found them distressingly concerned with commercial considerations. They are very fearful that historical themes handled in a way that we might want them handled will drive people away.

Wolfson: They don't trust humanity to be human. It's really as simple as that. They can't imagine how someone could portray someone who had been a living human being just by being human like him.

Fehr: There is one interesting thing on the German bookmarket. We have a great number of historic documentaries now which describe history in an individualized form, for instance, the Romans, the Huns, the Phoenicians, and so on. They always pick out one of these nations which really formed Europe at the base. The treatment of the Romans started with very serious books which had a good historical foundation, now it's deteriorated into a kind of picture story. But still, these works were on bestseller lists. There is, so far as I see, a great interest in history on the part of the public, but history explained with a human measure, not overall history, but, so to say, personalized. One of the great hits at the last bookfair was a historic art guide from Droemer, Deutscher Kulturführer, which is like a Baedeker, helping you to travel in Germany by giving you a good picture of the historic places and events. This interest in history is not adequately reflected in our TV programs, although we do have some series well done from time to time, but never shown during prime hours, and thus for an exclusive public. But the interest of the general public, I think, has helped to overcome the hostility toward history in the schools. Another feature in Germany, which is not shown on a national level, is local history. If you tell the story of a town, of one of the Länder, things fall into a different pattern and are often more appealing and much easier to understand. If I may make one further point: I began to photograph in Prague, at the university, what's going on in Czechoslovakia. What strikes every visitor there is how well preserved the monuments are. Of course, this was a problem after the war. When the aristocratic class and the Germans were driven out many castles or towns were left empty. There was a tendency in the Communist Party to let them go to shambles. Then a group of art historians successfully appealed. In East Germany on the other hand, some castles didn't fare too well being unwanted traces of a feudal stage of history. Not in Czechoslovakia. Their parliament decided: since we are Communists we have to prove to later generations that Communism came as a necessity conclusion of historic development. To that end we have to preserve the places of the former feudal class and of religion with its superstitions. The masses enjoy visiting these monuments. For them it is living history that falls into the pattern

with the Marxistic ideology, and the people are trained to see all things in a historic context. And, preservation is very good, supported by active local organizations.

Sheehan: I was going to note one exception to what you said. In Poland the government rebuilt all of the old monuments, even the Sobieski Palace. But they refused for a long time to rebuild the royal castle in the city of Warsaw. Later is was done with privately donated funds.

Schwencke: The situations in Czechoslovakia and Poland are different. In Poland it was done for a national reason. And not to teach Communism.

Fehr: Another European development indicative of history is the preservation of monuments of earlier industrialization..

Wolfson: Well, it's institutionalized here in various forms. The most famous, of course, is the restoration at Williamsburg. There are also numerous local groups that organize to preserve, e.g., covered bridges. Old kilns are restored. They still use the term furnaces to describe these localities. Although I don't think, oddly enough, that we glorify industry so much as must be the case in Europe.

Sheehan: I believe we don't. I can think of only one important reconstruction devoted to industry: that's Hagley Mills in Delaware.

Moltmann: In Mr. Sheehan's discussion at the beginning, he said that American history was really not so free of deep changes and referred to the defeat of the South in the Civil War. I wondered really how deep this conflict went. In the centennial of the Civil War many people claimed that the South is still unconvinced that it lost the Civil War. The same antagonism exists as it did a hundred years ago. Also he contended that there were 40 million immigrants who retained their ethnic identity, that this has consequences for the American sense of history. I think this fact supported the interest in history because ethnic groups are still here even more now than before. They're different from the American society, and they want to know why. In the last ten years you have seen an increase in studies of ethnic roots. In Germany we receive all these letters from Americans. They want help in finding out about their ancestors. At the History Department in Hamburg we get letters every month. Some American wants to know whether his ancestor has lived in Hamburg or not and whether we could find out about him. This, of course, is specific interest in geneology, but I would say that it includes history. Often it is combined with an interest in the social environment in which the ancestors lived. I would really like to hear something about the impact of the Bicentennial on the interest in history in the U.S. To which extent can all these activities be attributed to spontaneous interest in the Bicentennial or to the government's desire to stabilize the present state of American society.

Sheehan: I tend to agree with the interpretation of the American experience as so discontinuous that the salient characteristic of American society has been its unsettled character rather than the opposite. I used the Civil War simply as a major example. It was, after all, a cataclysmic event, proportionally more destructive than any war we've engaged in, before or since. And, I added the immigrants as evidence of the fact that the American society has not coalesced and , I would guess, still has not. I wonder if the evidence of that might be in the desire of immigrants to preserve their past. Insofar as they have a history and they consciously attempt to preserve that history, it is distinctively not an American history. I'm not sure I'm against that. I've simply asked what then does that mean for this notion that Americans are interested in their history and hence line in a coherent society. That I think is the problem. As to the Bicentennial, I suspect that it raised very little serious interest in history. It seems to me that the content of much of what was said was simply the old American wisdom on the subject which might be in some vague sense historical but certainly has nothing to do

with what academics say about history. Mostly, it manifested what I would conceive of as resistance to academic history. I'm not sure that academic history is necessarily valuable, therefore, for the preservation of the social order.

Krasean: I would have a specific example of a town here in Indiana. It's been said that Vincennes is the oldest continuous city, going back to the French times. Because of the role it played in the Revolution, with a man like George Rogers Clark, people felt very strongly about the Bicentennial. They wanted to organize for it. They did not get any help from the federal government and very little from the state government. So everything done had to be local. They wanted to preserve, or revive, their heritage, building an Indian village, an American pioneer village, and a French village. They were fortunate enough to find a 200 year old French house. Through local efforts it was restored and is now open to the public. The emergence of artifacts pertaining to that old era has stimulated, not on the academic level, but on the public level some more pride in what is the American past. This was increased by the fact that Vincennes is going to celebrate its 250th anniversary in a couple of years. So, in that particular local district the Bicentennial has generated much interest in history. Also, there has been a Clark Symposium in Vincennes which stimulated a few researchers and historians. The Indiana Historical Society had published the Symposium papers. I think aside from this there hasn't been much interest in the Bicentennial in the cities of Indiana. Lafayette was much interested in the French past and had the re-enactment of French coming down the Wabash. Forts were built at Fort Wayne and Lafayette. But, that's again from the point of view of preservation rather than on the academic level.

Kirkendall: I think large numbers of people looked upon the Bicentennial as an opportunity, tried to seize it and make out of it what they could. And, I think most people were quite dissapointed with what they were able to accomplish with the Bicentennial, not everyone, but most everyone. Perhaps Richard Nixon is the symbol of both of these things. He obviously looked upon the Bicentennial as an opportunity, and the appropriation he advocated and obtained on behalf of the Bicentennial administration indicates this very clearly. The money would run out July 4, 1976. Everything would come to the end with the triumph of his administration, just before the Republican national convention. It was going to be an event that showed how he had taken us out of that extremely difficult period we'd been in in the late '60s and early '70s. Of course, he wasn't around to celebrate the Bicentennial with us, at least from the White House, and that for me rather typifies the Bicentennial. Historians, I think, had the same kind of disappointment. Many of them looked upon it as an opportunity to promote discussion of the meaning of the American experience. For the most part they were disappointed with what they were able to accomplish. The story was a complete washout from the point of view of the historical profession. Many specialists in 18th-century American history were kept very busy during the Bicentennial year going about the country participating in programs, talking over national and local television. The reports that I've been getting this year frequently point to the Bicentennial as an explanation for a growth in interest in history on the part of the students. I think the disappointment on the part of the profession has been stronger than that positive reaction. In some, self-criticism has been involved. We wonder why we didn't seize the opportunity more effectively and, especially, why we didn't communicate effectively the notion that the Revolution was more than an event of July 4, 1776, that it was an entire era and that we should be thinking in terms of a rather large historical experience, rather than focusing all of our energies, as we tended to do, on July 4. There is a group in existence right now called the Council of the Original Thirteen States, which has a fair amount of money and is

trying to promote a continued discussion of the meaning of the American Revolution. They're going to have a different theme each year, from 1976 to 1989. They've drawn some historians into the planning efforts. But, I don't see much in the public press about them. Many people have suggested that the most exciting event of the Bicentennial, and I think this is meaningful --although I'm not sure what it means-- was the tall ships. That was the great event of the Bicentennial. Just what it had to do with 1776, I'm not quite sure, but it was an exciting event.

Fehr: I think the Bicentennial had an impact in Germany. I wonder whether my German colleagues could please confirm it. There were many celebrations going on because of sympathy toward America. But what was brought out in the consciousness of the German public was the role of the American Revolution. Europeans interpret the French Revolution as the central event of the modern era. But certainly one must see the American Revolution in the context of the Enlightenment, and in relation to contemporary events in Europe: the administrative achievement of Frederick the Great's reforms and Joseph II in Austria, which were similar to what the French accomplished by the Revolution. We now define the American Revolution as the first event in the development of a new concept of society in Western Europe. Because for the first time a free society established itself on the basis of the human rights and the ideas of the Enlightment. Europe looked upon America and the Enlightment as the basis for future development. Free Masons played an important role because they had great influence in Europe at the same time. This idea is now rooted in the consciousness of Europeans. France was before the Revolution the most reactionary country in Europe. The monarchy was overthrown by a bloody revolution. It achieved something that had been achieved in Germany by reforms, by unbloody development. The Revolution brought again back into power the reactionary forces in Germany. They established resistance against the French invasion and the old forces came into power again.

In this context it certainly would be worthwhile to devote some study to the influence of the American Revolution on the mind of Europeans.

Moltmann: In 1776, or now? Well, there are quite a few studies on that.

Fehr: Would you agree that in Germany there has been a new outlook on this development of history?

Moltmann: One could say that. I don't think however, I can quite agree with you concerning the importance of the reforms of Joseph II and Frederick the Great as being something comparable to the American Revolution. Historians usually say that the need for a revolution in Germany was not as strong as in America and in France because there were some reforms initiated by the governments, the Emperor and King of Prussia. Otherwise I agree, the American Revolution met very high interest in Germany. I'm a little amazed about the expectations of academic historians in the U.S. for the Bicentennial. They were suspicious of the Bicentennial because they knew that it would be used for other purposes, for political purposes. They hesitated to take part in that. In Germany this is the same. They went along, because they saw that the society somehowwas interested more so than in other years. The historians give lectures when they are asked, but basically I think there is a reluctance in academic circles, to become involved in these popular celebrations.

Kirkendall: There was a great deal of that. The Civil War Centennial had not been a happy experience, and many people were fearful of a repeat. And then as the event came closer and closer more and more of the people became fearful that there would be nothing but shabby performances connected with the Bicentennial. They became concerned that historians were defaulting on a responsibility. They felt they had to take part or be embarrassed after the thing was over. Of course, I'm talking about the peculiar group of

people that I associate with my position with the Organization of American Historians. The job has a political or public relations dimension to it. I spend a lot of time with people who think in terms of the profession and the relations between the profession and the public.

Wolfson: I was involved partly in preparing some material for Bicentennial observances that would take place in Germany, but I didn't go there myself. The content of those contributions was very much in the line of stimulating further study and research, and celebrating what we might call associated developments, for example the historical significance of institutions, the American Revolution as a European heritage. We went back to one of the main schools of interpretation of American history, the European roots approach. But here it was principally a popular carnival. It could have hardly been anything but that. I found it very amusing, reading the reactions of such newspapers as the Washington Post. "For a carnival, it was in pretty good taste." Everyone came away with a feeling of relief. People felt less embarrassed about being sentimental in public about this particular occasion. But if the historians as a profession or as a lobby had attempted to exercise influence on this, they would have been inevitably disappointed, and I think they were wise to hang back just a little bit, for whatever reason, because the public wasn't really looking to learn more about what was happening. In fact, most people I suspect, were pretty tired of these little TV spots about events that happened each day in 1776. Most of the events were familiar, so you weren't learning anything new anyway. It was a bore. The celebration, when it came, peaked with the tall ships. They were extremely impressive, as was the fireworks display in Washington and all the rest of that. And to give Mr. Ford credit for what little contribution he might have made, he was not mawkish, and that was a great relief to most people. Mr. Nixon I'm certain would have been mawkish; he would have milked it for everything it was worth. So it was reached, the climax came and everyone enjoyed it. And that was the end. It was a news event and it's gone. The historians can now pick up in a business-like way. See what you can make out of the interest that was aroused for that short span of time.

Sheenan: We have enjoyed a full and interesting discussion. With your permission I will bring it to a close. Thank you very much.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

The foregoing discussion revealed to the participants the wide-ranging interest that exists in history and in the relations between history and the study of society. Not only professional historians, but teachers of history and persons in other fields of endeavor who were sensitive to the importance of history expressed an assortment of views. Professor Moltmann, in his judicious and thought-provoking paper, set the tone of the discussions and introduced a number of significant issues. The vigor of the exchanges and the variety of the topics broached testified to the intensity of interest.

The areas of concern loomed large in the discussions: the problem of school curricula in Germany and the United States and the relationship between academic history and the character of a country.

On the issue of curricula, views appeared to be seriously split. One body of opinion favored a more traditional approach to historical subjects, particularly narrative history that would strengthen the students' sense of the past. Another view favored an approach that stressed the problems of society and hence would put history to use in the analysis of current affairs. Yet the discussion brought out areas of agreement. Both sides conceded that history must examine the character of society and both concurred that history must be more than the episodic study of current events.

The problem of the relations between academic history and society stimulated a number of comments on how different societies have cultivated their historical past. It seemed clear that throughout Europe and the United States in recent years a deep attachment to the artifacts of the past has developed. Even in Eastern Europe (for a special set of reasons) extensive resources have been expended in preserving the monuments of the past.

Inevitably, the discussions ended with a sense of frustration among the participants. The magnitude of the questions and the limited time for analysis made it virtually impossible to bring the issues to resolution. All of the participants agreed that the deliberations had been valuable but they had only touched the surface of the issues. Moreover, a consensus emerged that further discussions would profit those who took part in them and would also be of significance for the preservation of the long-standing relationship between West Germany and the United States.